



South Carolina DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

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ACRE Awards \$150K in Funding to 9 Agribusiness Entrepreneurs

COLUMBIA — The South Carolina Department of Agriculture's Agribusiness Center for Research and Entrepreneurship (ACRE) has awarded nine entrepreneurs a share of \$150,000 for their innovative agribusinesses.

"ACRE does a phenomenal job of helping homegrown agribusinesses advance their operations through funding and industry connections," said Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers. "I look forward to seeing how these entrepreneurs' success impacts South Carolina's agriculture industry."

Fourteen finalists pitched their business plans to a panel of three judges, who selected nine winners based on their business plans, a five-minute video pitch, and their need for capital. This year's group of awardees represent diverse business ventures from seven South Carolina counties:

1. [Earth People Farms](#) in Beaufort County is owned by sister and brother duo Najmah and Glen Thomas, whose recently developed EPFarmacy line of products include a collection of herbs and herbal products in the tradition of their African and Gullah/Geechee heritage.
2. Harleston Towles is the owner of [Rooting Down Farms](#), The Twenty Bag, and his newest business venture, Sandy Point Citrus. Using an innovative technique, Towles plans to grow specialty citrus fruits including Meyer lemons, ruby red grapefruits, and satsuma mandarin oranges in Charleston County.
3. [Whippoorwill Farms SC](#) is a biodiverse, regenerative farm located in Jasper County. Marissa Paykos owns and operates this 40-acre farm and agritourism destination that uses organic practices to raise pork, chickens, eggs, and vegetables.
4. On a 142-acre farm in Charleston County is [Lightning Rock Land & Cattle](#), a veteran- and woman-owned, family operated, and Homegrown by Heroes-certified farm. Wife and husband team Corrine and Trey Wright focus on land regeneration, carbon sequestration, and raising heritage breed cattle in an environmentally friendly way.



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5. [Rebecca Farms](#) in Florence County grows high-quality oyster and shiitake mushrooms at an affordable price. Since 2010, Jay and Rose Lewis have worked to build a farm that is vertically integrated, meaning everything is produced in-house.
6. Located in Dorchester County is [Rita's Roots Backyard Harvest](#), owned and operated by Rita Bachmann. What began in 2011 as an organic garden consultation service has grown into a full-service operation with the addition of a nursery division that supplies high-quality, seasonally appropriate vegetable, cut and pollinator flower and herb plants.
7. [Feast & Flora](#) is a woman-owned commercial cut flower farm operating on Wadmalaw Island, as well as a new brick-and-mortar design studio located in Charleston. Capitalizing on the talents of owner and lead designer Laura Mewbourn, Feast & Flora has become the only Lowcountry flower farm to offer full-service design and the only South Carolina flower farm with a retail storefront.
8. Located on a 7-acre farm in Pickens County is [Rambling Rosa Farm](#). Owned and operated by Brittany Arsiniega, Rambling Rosa grows diversified vegetables using organic methods, rescues farm animals, and shares a love for plants and animals with the community through product sales, educational classes, and community events.
9. [The CoffeeLady31](#), is a family-, minority-, and woman-owned business that began operations in a home kitchen in Spartanburg County. Cecelia Miller's business now consists of a mobile coffee truck that offers fresh-roasted coffee and espresso, and an apothecary and herb farm.

This year's awardees include the largest number of sustainable-focused agribusinesses awarded funding at one time. Of the selected awardees, five had previously participated in ACRE's Agribusiness Planning Curriculum program for beginning entrepreneurs.

"We are excited to see agribusinesses who previously participated in our Curriculum Program now being able to pursue more funding resources under the Advanced Program," says ACRE's Executive Director, Kyle Player.

SCDA founded ACRE in 2018 to help identify and nurture new ideas and businesses in the Palmetto State's agribusiness sector.

For more information, visit acre-sc.com/programs or contact Kyle Player at 803-734-2324 or kplayer@scda.sc.gov.

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